contacted Pakistani authorities to seek their assistance in the matter of release of Indian hostage in Afghanistan.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Agreement in the field of science and technology with U.S.

2476. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has signed an umbrella agreement on cooperation in the field of science and technology with U.S.;

(b) whether the delegation has visited Washington for this purpose;

(c) if so, the composition of such delegation;

(d) the expenditure incurred by Government thereon; and

(e) the areas identified for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Yes Sir. The India-US S&T Agreement was signed on 17 October, 2005 in Washington, D.C.

(b) to (c) Yes Sir, A three-member delegation comprising the Minister of State for Science and Technology and Ocean Development, Head of the International Cooperation, Department of Science and Technology and Private Secretary to MOS (S&T & OD) visited United States to sign the agreement.

(d) The estimated expenditure incurred by the Government is Rs. 7,12,000/-.

(e) The present Agreement is an umbrella inter-governmental agreement. Specific areas of bilateral cooperation would be identified subsequently.

Investment of EPF amount

2477. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether EPFO is examining the feasibility of investing a portion of the funds in equities to generate higher returns to make good the losses;

(b) if so, whether Government had worked out the guidelines for this purpose;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the total corpus of the EPF at present;

(e) the investment of the private funds in EPFO so far; and

(f) the utilization of the EPF amount in various categories during the current year, so far?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

(d) As on 31.10.2005, the total corpus of the Employees' Provident Fund was Rs. 82,896.05 crore.

(e) As per existing guidelines prescribed by the Central Board of Trustees, Employees' Provident Fund, the funds of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation can not be invested in private funds.

(f) After meeting obligatory payments like settlement, withdrawal etc., the monies are invested in accordance with the pattern of investment notified by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The corpus of the Employees' Provident Fund, as on 31.10.2005, is as under:—

(Rs. in crores)

Category	Amount
Central Government Securities	9270.81
State Government Securities	7624.58
Government Guaranteed Securities	422.14
Special Deposit Scheme of Central Government	52131.18
Public Financial Institutions	13447.34
TOTAL:	82,896.05